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SUBJECT: BURUNDI - RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT  
TRANSITION

REF: Bujumbura 00459

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Summary  
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¶1. Following significant political progress, the overall humanitarian situation is improving in Burundi. The transition from relief to development is underway, but humanitarian coordination is essential to prevent critical gaps between relief and development assistance. However, several variables have the potential to tilt the balance toward instability and a return to crisis conditions. To support the Government of Burundi (GOB) during this critical period, donors and relief and development actors must work to improve and/or create mechanisms to facilitate coordination and capacity building.  
End Summary.

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Background  
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¶2. From May 8 to June 10, a Disaster Operations Specialist from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) deployed to Burundi to assess the humanitarian situation throughout the country and facilitate the transition of USAID/OFDA's country office from expatriate to Foreign Service National (FSN) management. During this period, OFDA's Principal Regional Advisor, Administrative Officer, Regional Advisor, Food for Peace Officer, and Health Specialist visited Burundi to assist in the transition of the office and the development of future programming. During the course of the five-week mission, USAID/OFDA staff visited 11 of 17 provinces, and met with a number of U.N. agencies, donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

¶3. Political progress in Burundi, culminating in the peaceful 2005 presidential elections, has enabled much of the country to rebound from more than a decade of instability. The general

security situation has improved, curfew has been lifted, and peace talks continue in Tanzania between the GOB and remaining opposition group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL). Since 2002, nearly 300,000 Burundian refugees and an unknown number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned home. The U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Burundi (ONUB) is leaving at the end of 2006, and the U.N. is currently preparing a multisectoral integrated U.N. mission. Although humanitarian programs continue under the GOB Emergency Plan for 2006, the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is in the finalization process.

¶4. Since the beginning of the conflict in 1993, USAID/OFDA and other international donors have supported a range of humanitarian interventions in Burundi. As security and humanitarian conditions have improved, remaining needs are more related to chronic poverty than crisis, and short-term emergency response programs are less appropriate. The international community is gradually phasing out relief activities and donors are in the process of redirecting funding and programming toward transition activities, such as government support and community-based initiatives.

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Potentially Destabilizing Factors  
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¶5. While the outlook for Burundi is generally optimistic, challenges remain that could hinder or derail the path forward. The new government, largely comprised of staff without previous governance experience, is faced with the daunting task of rebuilding a country that has undergone 12 years of civil strife. Challenges include damaged infrastructure, a devastated economy, and insecurity arising from the departure of ONUB and continued FNL attacks. In addition, a number of destabilizing forces have the potential to derail the recovery: unrealistic expectations for the new government and a resulting frustrated populace, a large number of returnees that will overstretch limited services and bring conflicting land claims, food insecurity as a result of cassava mosaic disease (CMD) and chronic drought, and regional instability in the Great Lakes.

¶6. Limited Basic Services: The newly elected government has made several promises to the public, specifically in relation to free education and health care for pregnant women and children under-five. Most of the announcements followed GOB trips to assess conditions on the ground. However, at present, the GOB is unable to follow through on these promises due to a lack of viable infrastructure (hospitals, schools) and personnel (doctors, nurses, teachers). As schools, clinics, and hospitals become overwhelmed, the population's frustration has increased.

¶7. Stagnant Economy: Burundi's economy has not shown marked improvement since 2005 when it was ranked 169 out of 177 according to the UN Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index. More than 68 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and over 90 percent are subsistence farmers. Additionally, Burundi is the second most densely populated country globally, with an annual population growth rate

greater than three percent.

¶8. FNL and Security Concerns: The outcome of peace talks remain inconclusive and were suspended last week when talks broke down amid mutual recriminations. The talks are set to resume July 13.

¶9. Returnees: To date in 2006, only 3.8 percent (3,792 people) of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) planned 100,000 refugees has returned from Tanzania. However, UNHCR states that the lower figures are in part a result of the observed cycle of movement, in which major returns are registered from May to July, just after the harvest in Tanzania. As the Tanzanian Government has requested that refugees return to Burundi, UNHCR commenced a repatriation campaign on June 20 and expects 85,000 people to return by December ¶2006. Additional returnees will place significant strain on already limited services.

¶10. Food Insecurity: Although the current harvest is expected to be relatively good throughout most of the country (see reftel), food insecurity will likely re-emerge during the upcoming dry season. Coping mechanisms for these periods have consistently been inadequate, and there is concern of another "hunger period" from August to September. Further, while various organizations are addressing cassava mosaic disease (CMD) through the planting of resistant cuttings, there will not be enough cuttings to mitigate the effects of CMD until 2008 at the earliest, according to specialists.

¶11. Regional Instability: According to UNHCR, more than 30,000 Congolese refugees reside in Burundi, and there is concern that this number

will increase with the July elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Further, in recent months, approximately 20,000 refugees have arrived from Rwanda. Current caseloads are adequately managed by UNHCR and other partners, but a large influx could prove problematic.

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Transition from Relief to Development  
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-NGOs-

¶12. NGOs are moving at different speeds in adjusting to the transition from relief to development. Strategy development meetings with several NGO headquarter staff indicate that there is acceptance of the changing trend at the headquarters level. Unfortunately, adopting a development philosophy is not easy for all aid workers, many of whom have been working in Burundi in a relief capacity for several years.

¶13. NGOs and the GOB are also at odds over who should control donor funding in Burundi. Some NGOs have voiced concerns about perceived GOB hostility toward NGOs, but these concerns are not shared by all NGOs. At the same time, some members of the GOB worry that NGOs act without accountability, and the GOB has openly stated that the now democratically-elected GOB should control relief programs and the donor funding that supports them. Currently, 70 percent of donor funding goes to NGOs. In addition, NGOs do not adequately share information with the GOB, and the GOB seems to have some confusion about how NGOs operate.

¶14. U.N. transition efforts appear to be on target. ONUB is scheduled to depart from Burundi on December 31, and an integrated mission is scheduled to take its place. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has begun to hand over leadership of the international response to the U.N. Development Program (UNDP). In a recent donor meeting with OCHA, donors agreed that OCHA should remain in country through 2007 to continue coordination efforts and ensure a successful transition.

-Donors-

¶15. USAID and other major donors to Burundi have made significant pledges to bridge the gap from relief to development, most of which are directed toward the GOB's Emergency Plan for 2006 (see reftel). Relief and development donors agree on the need to prioritize capacity-building activities for the GOB's National Committee for the Coordination of Aid to enable the GOB to coordinate the aid and development sectors.

¶16. In FY 2006, USAID's Regional Economic Development Services Office for East and Southern Africa (USAID/REDSO) obligated USD 9.3 million for conflict mitigation, democracy and governance, HIV/AIDS, health, and livelihoods programs, and has requested USD 9.5 million for FY 2007. For FY 2005, USAID/OFDA provided USD 9.8 million in health, nutrition, relief commodities, food security, and water and sanitation activities. FY 2006 funding is not yet complete, but is expected to be considerably less, consistent with the transition to development programs.

¶17. The Belgian Development Cooperation (BDC), the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC), the Swiss Agency for Development and

Cooperation, and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPIC) Initiative have also pledged significant development assistance in support of the GOB.

a. BDC has committed approximately Euro 15 million to the GOB's Plan D'Urgence, Euro three million into a UNDP-held trust fund, and several million Euros to U.N. organizations. The BDC expects to allocate approximately 60 million Euros over the next three years.

b. DFID has pledged approximately 10 million pounds, six million of which will go to the UNDP trust fund (and then to the Plan d'Urgence), while the remainder will go to OVC programming (education, health).

c. The EC has pledged approximately 66.75 million Euros toward a rural development program in five provinces over three years. The EC is also committing 19.75 million Euros to good governance initiatives. The EC Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) funding levels will vary between 12 and 17 million Euros, most of which will go to U.N. organizations. ECHO is ending all support for emergency health and nutrition programs.

d. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has pledged approximately 17 million Euros, focusing on Ngozi Province.

e. The World Bank and IMF have approved the GOB for USD 60 million under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPIC) Initiative. Upon finalization of the PRSP, the GOB will receive an estimated USD 115 million, most of which will fund the development of infrastructure and services.

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Conclusions / Recommendations  
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¶18. The transition from relief to development is slow, and critical gaps between relief and development assistance could emerge. The USAID/OFDA Disaster Operations Specialist recommends the following actions for USAID to support the transition:

a. Improved coordination among donors. Relief and development donors should begin a dialogue to avoid gaps in services during the transition period. While it is important to support the GOB's efforts to coordinate donor activities, it is critical that an effective monitoring mechanism be set up rapidly to ensure that donor funds are used as effectively as possible. USAID should organize regular meetings that include relief and development donors, as well as GOB representatives.

b. The U.N. Country Team (UNCT) should be encouraged toward greater cooperation internally and externally. USAID should promote dialogue between and amongst UNCT members through hosting sectoral meetings or through supporting UNOCHA in hosting sectoral meetings. GOB representatives should be invited to attend these meetings.

c. Tensions between the NGO community and the GOB, although not shared by all, should be addressed immediately so that they do not impede the path forward. Transparency and information sharing is necessary so that trust can be developed. A facilitated dialogue convened by a neutral but respected party could assist in this. The USG can help to identify said person and promote said dialogue.

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